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ABSTRACT

Against a background of declining student performance and fragmented programs, the Oakland (California) Unified School District reorganized its reading programs and instructional support personnel. This included reorganization of the central office, new positions, and a new department of curriculum and instruction. An instructional strategy council was established, which included parents and citizen leaders, as well as school staff. Technical task teams composed of teachers, administrators, and instructional support personnel were formed to serve the instructional strategy council; they were charged with developing learning expectations and curriculum guides in specific subject areas. This paper includes a list of points to consider in evaluating reading programs. (AA)

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LEADERSHIP ROLES IN READING

by
RUTH B. LOVE

ALASKA READING ASSOCIATION

October 29, 1976

IT IS A DISTINCT PLEASURE FOR ME TO ADDRESS THIS CONFERENCE. YOUR FOCUS ON THE ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN THE AREA OF READING IS A CRITICAL ONE FOR IT SPEAKS TO THE RECOGNITION THAT EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE IS DEPENDENT UPON STRONG AND VIABLE LEADERSHIP. I HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF WORKING WITH SOME OF YOU AND AM DELIGHTED TO RETURN AND NOTE YOUR PROGRESS. YOU SEE, I DID MY PRIVATE PRE-POST TEST ON ALASKA. PERMIT ME TO SHARE AN EDITORIAL FROM A NEW YORK NEWSPAPER. IT BEGAN "WHEN WE WERE BOYS, STUDENTS HAD TO DO A LITTLE WORK IN SCHOOL. THEY WERE NOT COAXED. THEY WERE HAMMERED. SPELLING, WRITING AND ARITHMETIC WERE NOT ELECTIVES. YOU HAD TO LEARN." THE WRITER GOES ON, "IN THESE MORE FORTUNATE TIMES, ELEMENTARY EDUCATION HAS BECOME A SORT OF . . . SHOW. THE CHILD MUST BE KEPT AMUSED AND LEARNS WHAT HE PLEASES. MANY TEACHERS SCORN THE OLD-FASHIONED RUDIMENTS. IT SEEMS TO BE REGARDED AS BETWEEN A MISFORTUNE AND A CRIME FOR A CHILD SIMPLY TO LEARN TO READ." QUOTE N.Y. SUN. 1902. *I SPEAK FROM A NEW PERSPECTIVE - AGE 19 - IF THEY HAD LISTENED WHAT WOULD YOU CHANGE? TONIGHT, I WOULD LIKE US TO LOOK AT EDUCATION GENERALLY AND READING SPECIFICALLY.

IT IS PRESUMPTUOUS OF ME TO TELL YOU EDUCATION IS SERIOUS BUSINESS; IT IS BIG BUSINESS AND SOME FEEL THAT IT IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS. FEW WOULD ARGUE WITH THE NOTION THAT OUR DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IS PREDICATED ON AN EDUCATED CITIZENRY. TO BE TRULY MEANINGFUL, EDUCATION HAS TO BE THE PRIMARY VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC MOBILITY.

AS IS OFTEN THE CASE, HOWEVER, THE GAP BETWEEN OUR PRINCIPLES AND OUR PRACTICES IS WIDE. PERHAPS NO OTHER INSTITUTION HAS UNDERGONE THE DEGREE OF SCRUTINY AS HAS PUBLIC EDUCATION. DURING THE DECADE OF THE 60'S, PARENTS AND PEDAGOGY, PROFESSIONAL AND NON-PROFESSIONAL, MADE DEMANDS, EXPRESSED DISENCHANTMENT;

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IT WAS AND IS NOT SURPRISING THAT MUCH OF THE CRITICISM FOCUSSED ON READING. FOR WE KNOW THAT READING ALONG WITH THE OTHER COMMUNICATION SKILLS ARE ESSENTIAL TO A FULFILLING, PRODUCTIVE LIFE. (THIS PREVAILING NEED, COUPLED WITH A GROWING AWARENESS OF THE SHORTCOMINGS CREATED UNPARALLED PROTEST DURING THE ERA OF THE 60's.) RECENTLY I WAS ASKED WHAT I CONSIDERED TO BE THE GRAVEST EDUCATIONAL PROBLEM IN OAKLAND. NOT MUCH THOUGHT WAS NEEDED - STUDENT PERFORMANCE.

IT IS VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE TO ADDRESS THE TOPIC OF LEADERSHIP IN READING OR ANY OTHER ASPECT OF EDUCATION WITHOUT DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE STATUS OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE. A NUMBER OF STUDIES HAS FOUND CLEAR EVIDENCE OF A SPIRALING DECLINE IN READING, WRITING AND COMPUTATIONAL SKILLS. A RECENTLY RECEIVED PIECE OF RESEARCH BY THE LOS ANGELES TIMES POINTS OUT THAT AFTER A CENTURY OF UPWARD MOVEMENT, ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS AT AN ALL TIME LOW. THE STUDY FURTHER INDICATES THERE IS NO SIGN OF LEVELING OFF. LET US LOOK FOR A MOMENT AT SOME OF THE CONDITIONS AND NATURE OF THIS DRAMATIC DECLINE.

1. CHILDREN IN LARGE CITIES ARE UNDERACHIEVING IN READING.- 40%
2. THE AVERAGE ELEMENTARY CHILD HAS SOME NEED OF SPECIAL HELP IN BASIC SKILLS. 11% OF THE 17 YEAR OLDS WERE FUNCTIONAL ILLITERATES.
3. INTERESTINGLY THE DECLINE APPEARS TO BE GENERALIZED AND ENCOMPASSES ALL ECONOMIC AND ETHNIC GROUPS.
4. IT AFFECTS ALL REGIONS OF OUR NATION IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SCHOOLS.
5. A DISPORTIONATE PERCENTAGE OF POOR AND MINORITY STUDENTS ARE SCORING LOW, BUT THE TREND INCLUDES STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE ECONOMIC SPECTRUM. - GRADE INFLATION CREPT IN, IN THE 1960's.
6. DURING THE SAME DECADE, OTHER SOCIETY CHANGES OCCURRED WHICH HAD A SERIOUS IMPACT ON THE EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISE. BY THE TIME A STUDENT GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL, HE HAD HAD SOME 13,000 HOURS OF SCHOOL EXPOSURE, AND 15,000 HOURS IN FRONT OF A T.V. THE NUMBER OF WORKING MOTHERS DOUBLED. SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES INCREASED BY 20%. PROFOUND CHANGES OCCURRED IN OUR AUTHORITY SYSTEM. WE MOVED FROM A RATHER RIGID AUTHORITY SYSTEM TO "DO YOUR OWN THING."

WE WOULD ALL AGREE THAT DEFINING THE PROBLEM IS FAR EASIER THAN FINDING THE SOLUTION. YET, AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERS, IT IS ENCUMBERED UPON US TO SEEK SOLUTIONS. AND WE DO KNOW THAT THE DECADE OF THE 60's WAS ONE OF THE MOST DISORIENTED,

DISTRACTED AND DISLOCATED DECADES IN OUR HISTORY. ONE OF THE GREAT PARADOXES IN RECENT TIMES IS THE GLARING FACT THAT AT A TIME WHEN EDUCATION RECEIVED MORE MONEY, PURCHASED MORE MATERIALS, TRAINED MORE TEACHERS AND PREPARED MORE STUDENTS, WAS ALSO A TIME IN WHICH THERE WAS A DROP IN ENROLLMENT IN BASIC ACADEMIC SUBJECTS, A LOWERING OF STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS. ONE SOCIOLOGIST SAID,"A SOCIETY GETS THE CHILDREN IT DESERVES."

IN OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT, LIKE OTHERS THROUGHOUT THE U.S., EDUCATORS RESPONDED TO PRESSURES FOR FLEXIBILITY IN COURSES, GROUPING PRACTICES, GRADING AND OTHER PROCEDURES. THE SCHOOLS RESPONDED WITH MORE ELECTIVES, FEWER REQUIREMENTS, AND STANDARDS. RELEVANCE BECAME THE BY-WORD, SOMETIMES UNTESTED WITH REASON. INNOVATION WAS DEFIED, SOMETIMES WITHOUT INSIGHT. IN AN EFFORT AT RESPONSIVENESS IN EDUCATION, WE MOVED FROM THE TRADITIONAL 3 R's TO THE 5 1's: INNOVATION, INDIVIDUALIZATION INVOLVEMENT, IDENTITY AND IMPLEMENTATION.

THE IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IS SIMPLY THIS: CHANGE CAN NOT ALWAYS BE EQUATED WITH PROGRESS. THEREFORE, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO ASSESS PRIOR TO ACTION, AND TO RESPOND RATHER THAN REACT. I WOULD SUBMIT THAT THE QUOTIENT OF ERRORS WOULD BE SUBSTANTIALLY REDUCED.

HEREIN LIES A MAJOR CHALLENGE TO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP, AT ALL LEVELS. DON'T DO IT ALONE. BUILD A TEAM.

JUST AS THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL SETS THE TONE FOR PROGRESS AT THE SITE, SO THE SUPERINTENDENT SETS THE TONE FOR THE DISTRICT. IF INDEED, READING IS TO RECEIVE INDEPTH ATTENTION, THE BOARD OF EDUCATION AND THE SUPERINTENDENT MUST ESTABLISH IT AS A TOP PRIORITY. NOW, IT IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE, BUT IT IS ALTOGETHER POSSIBLE. FOR THOSE BUSY ADMINISTRATORS THERE ARE SOME CRITERIA TO USE IN DETERMINING WHETHER OR NOT READING IS YOUR PRIORITY: 1) THE AMOUNT OF TIME YOU AND OTHERS SPEND IN READING AND READING SUPPORT. 2) THE AMOUNT OF MONEY YOU SPEND ON IT: AND 3) THE QUALITY OF YOUR DISTRICT'S PROGRAM. THINK ABOUT THOSE THREE: TIME, MONEY AND QUALITY.

IT IS THIS THIRD AREA (QUALITY) WHICH ULTIMATELY IS AFFECTED BY THE PRIOR TWO. THE AMOUNT OF TIME, ENERGY AND EFFORT SPENT IN DISCUSSING, PLANNING, MODIFYING READING IS

CRUCIAL TO ITS QUALITY. A FEW QUESTIONS MAY ASSIST US IN PLACING OUR PRIORITIES IN PERSPECTIVE.

- HOW MUCH ADMINISTRATIVE AND SPECIALIST TIME IS SPENT IN PLANNING, MONITORING, SERVICING THE READING PROGRAM?

- WHILE IT IS ESTIMATED THAT OVER 50% OF THE FUNDS IN ELEMENTARY MATERIALS IS ALLOCATED TO READING, HOW MUCH IS PROVIDED FOR IN-SERVICE FOR TEACHERS? HOW MUCH TIME AND MONEY ARE EARMARKED FOR TRAINING IN MANAGING THE READING PROGRAM?

- WHERE DO THE READING SPECIALISTS SPEND THEIR TIME, HELPING TEACHERS AND CHILDREN OR COORDINATING ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS?

- WHAT KINDS OF MATERIALS ARE PURCHASED AND BY WHAT CRITERIA?

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT OUR SCHOOLS IN OAKLAND, LIKE YOUR OWN, HAVE MADE PROGRESS IN RECENT YEARS. BUT WE HAVE SHARED WITH YOU, THE SAME PROBLEMS OF DECLINING RESOURCES, AND DECLINING ACHIEVEMENT, TEACHER MILITANCY, NEGATIVE PUBLICITY ABOUT SCHOOLS IN GENERAL AND THE NEED TO OPERATE ON A KIND OF "CRISIS MANAGEMENT" BASIS. IN FACT, I THINK CIRCUMSTANCES HAVE FORCED MOST OF US INTO CRISIS MANAGEMENT AND ITS DAY-TO-DAY MANIFESTATIONS, TO THE EXTENT THAT WE HAVE ONLY RECENTLY HAD TO COME FULLY TO TERMS WITH THE REAL CRISIS, AND THAT IS THE NATION-WIDE DECLINE IN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT.

IN OAKLAND WE HAVE SET SOME FRESH GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR OURSELVES:

1. CHILDREN WHO COMPLETE THE THIRD GRADE WILL BE ABLE TO PERFORM BASIC SKILLS.
2. A PROGRAM ON INTERVENTION WILL BE PROVIDED FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE CHILDREN WHO ARE OR FALL ONE YEAR BEHIND GRADE LEVEL EXPECTATIONS IN BASIC SKILLS; AND
3. GRADUATING STUDENTS WILL POSSESS THE ACADEMIC RESOURCES FOR HIGHER EDUCATION/TRAINING OR A MARKETABLE SKILL.

NOW WE HAVE A NUMBER OF SUPPORT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.

WHEN WE SAT DOWN AND ANALYZED HOW WE WOULD MEET THESE GOALS, WE REALIZED SEVERAL THINGS. FIRST, OUR ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE SIMPLY DID NOT CORRESPOND TO OUR DETERMINATION TO MAKE INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT OUR NUMBER ONE PRIORITY. YEARS OF "SURVIVAL BUDGETS" HAD WHITHERED AWAY OUR CURRICULUM SUPPORT POSITIONS, MOREOVER, SUCH INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL AVAILABLE TO US WERE VIRTUALLY ALL FROM SPECIAL STATE AND FEDERAL PROJECTS. WE HAD NO STANDARDS OR CURRICULUM GUIDES, NO CONTINUITY OF BOOKS, PROGRAMS OR METHODS, AND LOWER

GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS.

AND SO WE REORGANIZED. THE 1st STATEMENT I MADE - - - -. WHICH IS EASIER SAID THAN DONE. YES, WE USED OUTSIDE TECHNICAL ADVISORS, AND AN INTERNAL TEAM FROM ALL FACETS OF OUR SCHOOL DISTRICT, BUT "INITIATING A NEW ORDER OF THINGS" IS HAZARDOUS TO CONDUCT. (PRINCIPAL AS INSTRUCTION LEADER). WE HAVE REDEFINED ROLES AT THE SITE LEVEL, CREATING NEW ASSISTANT PRINCIPALSHIPS FOR EITHER INSTRUCTION OR ADMINISTRATION, AND ADDED ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM ASSISTANT POSITIONS. WE HAVE ESTABLISHED A NEW DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION, WITH A FRESH CADRE OF PERSONS CHARGED WITH CURRICULUM LEADERSHIP AND REVITALIZATION. OUR AREA OFFICES ARE STAFFED WITH PEOPLE IN SUBJECT MATTER SPECIALITIES. WE STREAMLINED AND CONSOLIDATED OUR CENTRAL OFFICE FUNCTIONS INTO TWO DIVISIONS. LIKE MANY SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS, WE HAVE FALLEN VICTIM TO THE BANDAID APPROACH TO EDUCATION - ADDING LAYERS THROUGH FEDERAL AND STATE FUNDS, BUT WITH LITTLE CHANGE IN THE BASIC SYSTEM OF EDUCATION. TO A LARGE EXTEND WE HAD BECOME A SERIES OF TITLES - I, II, III, ETC. AS A SERVICE UNIT TO SCHOOLS. PLACED PRINCIPAL ON CABINET.

EVEN BEFORE WE HAD COMPLETED THE TASK OF DEPLOYING TO HUMAN RESOURCES TO MATCH OUR INSTRUCTIONAL INTENTIONS, WE BEGAN THE PROCESS OF CURRICULUM OVERHAUL. DRAWING UPON PARENT AND CITIZEN LEADERS, AS WELL AS OUR MOST TALENTED STAFF, WE SET UP AN INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY COUNCIL. SERVING THIS COUNCIL ARE A LARGE NUMBER OF TECHNICAL TASK TEAMS, THE FIRST OF WHICH WERE IN THE AREAS OF READING AND LANGUAGE ARTS, MATH, TIME ALLOTMENT, CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND STUDENT MOTIVATION AND GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS. OTHERS ARE MOVING INTO ACTION IN THE AREAS OF SCIENCE, FOREIGN LANGUAGE, SOCIAL SCIENCE, HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION, FINE ARTS, CAREER AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, BILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION -- AND MORE. THESE TEAMS ARE COMPOSED OF OUR BEST TEACHERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT PERSONNEL CHARGED WITH DEVELOPING LEARNING EXPECTATION AND GUIDES. THEIR CURRICULUM PRODUCTS, AND PLANS FOR THE CONCOMITANT STAFF DEVELOPMENT, ARE REVIEWED WITH THE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY COUNCIL WHICH IN TURN PRESENTS THEM TO THE SUPERINTENDENT FOR FURTHER SCRUTINY AND THEN RELEASE TO THE FIELD FOR IMPLEMENTATION. EACH SCHOOL, LED BY PRINCIPAL, ASSISTED BY READING SPECIALIST DEVELOPED INDIVIDUAL PLANS UNIQUE TO THE SCHOOL, BUT WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THE DISTRICT THRUST.

THIS IS A SIMPLIFIED SUMMARY OF OUR MAJOR THRUST, AND THERE ARE MANY OTHER FEATURES. WE'RE WORKING IN VIGOROUS NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY, WITH ONE SPIN-OFF OF FIRMS TO "ADOPT" A SCHOOL AND MAKE THEIR RESOURCES AVAILABLE. WE'RE HAMMERING OUT NEW RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL UNIVERSITIES IN ORDER TO BETTER TAP AND HARNESS THE INSTRUCTIONAL TALENT THEY FREQUENTLY KEEP SEQUESTERED IN THEIR IVORY TOWERS. WE'RE EXPANDING OUR SCHOOL VOLUNTEER EFFORT INTO AN OAKLAND EDUCATION CORPS, AND CHALLENGING OUR VARIOUS CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUPS TO REAPPRAISE THEIR ROLES TO SEE HOW THEY CAN BETTER SUPPORT THE DRIVE FOR INCREASED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT. WE'VE SET SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES FOR IMPROVED ATTENDANCE AND REDUCED VANDALISM COSTS, WITH THE SAVINGS GOING INTO OUR INSTRUCTIONAL EFFORT. IN OUR DISTRICT, SOME OF OUR SCHOOLS ARE DOING TRULY EXCEPTIONAL WORK IN, FOR EXAMPLE, ELEMENTARY READING, OR JUNIOR HIGH MATH, OR SENIOR HIGH SCIENCE. WE PLAN TO IDENTIFY AND REWARD SUCH ACHIEVEMENT, DESIGNATING THESE "SPECIALITY SCHOOLS" AND GIVING THEM THE CAPACITY TO SERVE AS DEMONSTRATION CENTERS FOR TEACHERS AND CHILDREN FROM THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT.

I AM AWARE THAT THOSE OF YOU GATHERED HERE HELP SET THE BASIC POLICIES FOR OUR PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATION, AND INDEED, OUR PROFESSION. PERHAPS YOU HAVE DETECTED IN MY REMARKS A PREOCCUPATION WITH WHAT ARE CALLED THE BASIC SKILLS - AT ANY RATE, I HOPE YOU HAVE. BUT I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT "GOING BACK TO THE BASICS," I'M SUGGESTING WE SHOULD MOVE FORWARD TO THE BASICS. AND IN "THE BASICS" I INCLUDE NOT ONLY THE OBVIOUS, BUT THE CAPACITIES TO THINK, SOLVE PROBLEMS, DEVELOP A POSITIVE SELF-CONCEPT AND COMMUNICATE AND RESPECT WITH OTHERS WITH DIFFERENT CULTURAL, ETHNIC AND ECONOMICAL BACKGROUNDS. THESE ARE FUNDAMENTAL SKILLS AND CONCEPTS NECESSARY TO FUNCTION IN OUR SOCIETY AND INDEED THE WORLD.

BUT LET'S FACE IT, FOR SOME TWENTY YEARS, WE IN EDUCATION HAVE TRIED -- WITHOUT TOO MUCH SUCCESS -- TO BE ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE. WE HAVE, LIKE THE RIDER IN STEPHEN LEACOCK'S POEM, RUN OUT, JUMPED ON THE HORSE AND RIDDEN OFF IN ALL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN READING. WE'VE BEEN FORCED TO MAKE THIS EFFORT FOR A VARIETY OF COMPLEX REASONS, BUT THE FACT HAS BEEN THAT PEOPLE, AS ONE FRIEND OF MINE PUTS IT, "HAVE ASKED OF THEIR SCHOOLS WHAT THEY USED TO PRAY TO GOD FOR."

THERE ARE NO EASY ANSWERS AND SIMPLE SOLUTIONS. AS LEADERS, WHETHER AT THE CENTRAL OFFICE OR IN THE LOCAL SCHOOL - LET ME SUGGEST THAT A SYSTEMATIC CYCLE - SUCH AS MANY OF

YOU ALREADY UTILIZE - CAN BE ENORMOUSLY HELPFUL IN EMBARKING UPON THE READING THRUST, THROUGH SEVERAL PHASES:

1. ASSESSMENT - LEARN AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ABOUT THE EXISTING PROGRAMS - THE METHODS USED, VARYING MATERIALS, AMOUNT OF TIME.

2. DEVELOPMENT - UTILIZE YOUR MOST EFFECTIVE STAFF AND CITIZENS TO DETERMINE STANDARDS AND GUIDES, SET CRITERIA FOR TEXTBOOKS AND A PLAN FOR.

3. IMPLEMENTATION - WITH A DISTRICT THRUST (NOT ONE PROGRAM) PROVIDE FOR EACH SCHOOL TO DEVELOP ITS IMPLEMENTATION PLAN.

4. EVALUATION - SET UP THE DESIGN AT THE BEGINNING. EVOLUTION GOES HAND IN HAND WITH NEEDS ASSESSMENT.

5. FEEDBACK AND MODIFICATION - UTILIZING WHAT WE KNOW AND WHAT WE DISCOVER IS A MAJOR WEAKNESS IN EDUCATION. ON THE DISTRICT LEVEL, SPECIALISTS AND OTHERS OUGHT TO HAVE A SYSTEM FOR DETERMINING AND DISSEMINATING THOSE COMPONENTS AND PROCESSES WHICH WORK UNDER GIVEN CIRCUMSTANCES.

6. ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM - EACH ADMINISTRATOR OUGHT TO HAVE A WAY OF DETERMINING WHERE YOUR DISTRICT OR SCHOOL IS IN READING PRIOR TO JUNE OR THE CLOSE OF SCHOOL.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF READING CALLS FOR DEFINED ROLES AND DEFINITIVE PROGRAMS - (THE READING SPECIALIST, COORDINATOR, PSYCHOLOGIST, LIBRARY). SINCE SOME 90% OF ALL READING INSTRUCTION OCCURS WITHIN THE CLASSROOM, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT EDUCATION LEADERS DE-MYSTIFY THE READING PROCESS AND CLEARLY DELINEATE WHAT A SCHOOL DISTRICT'S READING PROGRAM MUST EMCOMPASS. NOW I HASTEN TO POINT OUT THAT ONE IS LIKELY TO BE CRITICIZED AS THE AGE OLD METHODOLOGICAL ARGUMENT LOOMS BEFORE YOU. NOT THE METHOD, NO TEACHER PROOF. HOWEVER, FOR TOO LONG WE IN LEADERSHIP ROLES HAVE BACKED AWAY FROM DEFINING WHAT IS EXPECTED AND BY WHOM. SO, AT THE RISK OF SOUNDING TOO PRESCRIPTIVE, PERMIT ME TO DO JUST THAT - - MAY I ASK THAT EACH OF YOU THINK ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL PROGRAMS OR A SCHOOL THAT YOU ARE HELPING.

A MUST FOR READING PROGRAMS OR DOES YOUR PROGRAM HAVE?:

- WELL DEFINED, MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVES FOR THE DISTRICT, THE SCHOOL AND THE CHILD.
- APPROACHES AND METHODS BASED ON THEORY AND UNDERSTOOD BY TEACHERS.
- ENCOMPASS ALL OF THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS SINCE READING IS NOT ISOLATED FROM THINKING, SPEAKING, WRITING, LISTENING.
- TECHNIQUES AND METHODS OF DIAGNOSING, PRESCRIBING AND INFORMING STUDENTS (WHAT KIND OF STUDENT PROFILES ARE AVAILABLE) OF STRENGTHS.

- DOES THE PROGRAM INCLUDE BROAD COMPONENTS OF SEQUENTIAL STEPS IN WORD-RECOGNITION, COMPREHENSION, VOCABULARY AND OTHER ESSENTIALS?

- IS THERE PROVISION FOR IN-DEPTH EDUCATIONAL AND NON-EDUCATIONAL DIAGNOSIS OF STRENGTHS?

- DOES IT INCLUDE SPECIFIC MOTIVATIONAL STRATEGIES TO KEEP STUDENTS INTERESTS KEEN?

- IS THE CURRICULUM RELEVANT TO THE DIVERSITY IN THE CLASSROOM - CULTURALLY, ETHNICALLY AND ECONOMICALLY? - Dick & Jane

- ARE THERE LEARNING EXPECTATIONS AND STANDARDS FOR EACH LEVEL AND GUIDES AS TO WHAT CAN BE LEARNED?

- MATERIALS WITH WHICH STUDENTS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS CAN RELATE?

- PROVIDE FOR STUDENTS FROM VARYING ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS AND OFFER OPPORTUNITY FOR SUCCESS AND PROGRESS.

- ARE THERE TECHNIQUES FOR INSURING CONTINUITY OF METHODS AND MATERIALS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS?

- LONGITUDINAL FROM ELEMENTARY THROUGH SENIOR HIGH.

- IS THERE A METHOD FOR ON-GOING DOCUMENTATION AND ASSESSMENT OF INDIVIDUAL STUDENT PERFORMANCES?

- DOES THE PROGRAM EMBRACE AND INCLUDE ALL SUBJECTS - SOCIAL SCIENCE, MATH, SCIENCE, ETC., INOTHER WORDS - ARE WE STRESSING LEARN TO READ AND READ TO LEARN?

- ARE THE PROVISIONS FOR EVOLUTION FORMAL AND INFORMAL?

PLACING PRIORITY ON READING - DEVELOPING AND MAINTAINING VIABLE PROGRAMS PRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGE. IT MEANS RESTRUCTURING PRIORITIES, ELIMINATING SOME ACTIVITIES AND MAKING PAINFUL DECISIONS. I AM REMINDED OF THE FAMOUS ITALIAN PHILOSOPHER WHO SAID, "THERE IS NOTHING MORE DIFFICULT TO CARRY OUT, MORE HAZARDOUS TO CONDUCT, OR MORE UNCERTAIN ITS SUCCESS, THAN TO INITIATE A NEW ORDER OF THINGS."

ONE FINAL AREA - THAT OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT. THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR MULTIPLE TYPES OF IN-SERVICE EDUCATION IN CLASSROOM HELP, SEMINARS AND COURSES, RESOURCE CENTERS (TEACHER SHELTERS); RELEASE TIME, DEMONSTRATION SCHOOLS, MASTER TEACHER. THE TYPE IS FINE, BUT CONTENT IS CRUCIAL. PROVIDING TEACHERS WITH THE HELP THEY NEED IS A VITAL LEADERSHIP FUNCTION. IN OUR ISC PROCESS, STAFF DEVELOPMENT IS CLOSELY RELATED TO THE CURRICULUM REVITALIZATION. WHETHER SUPERINTENDENT, PRINCIPAL OR SPECIALIST - WE HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY TO BE AWARE OF AND DEVISE PROGRAMS TO MEET THE NEEDS.

IN PUBLIC EDUCATION IT'S CLEAR WE HAVE GOT TO NARROW OUR MISSION. BUT THIS COURSE IS NOT WITHOUT ITS HAZARDS. IT HAS BEEN WELL SAID THAT TODAY THE THREE LEAST CREDIBLE SENTENCES IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARE:

1. THE CHECK IS IN THE MAIL.
2. OF COURSE I'LL RESPECT YOU AS MUCH IN THE MORNING.
3. I'M FROM THE GOVERNMENT AND I'M HERE TO HELP YOU.

I DON'T WANT US TO ADD A FOURTH: BECAUSE AMERICANS ARE SUDDENLY WORRIED ABOUT DECLINING TEST SCORES, HER LOYAL EDUCATORS WILL MAGICALLY GUARANTEE DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENTS.

IT'S CLEAR THAT OUR CRITICS HAVE GROWN IN NUMBERS AND INTEND TO CONTINUE TO BE TOUGH ON US. BUT SINCE THE WHOLE SOCIETY IS FINALLY GETTING INTERESTED IN HOLDING US ACCOUNTABLE, I THINK WE SHOULD START GETTING TOUGH ON JUST WHAT WE'RE WILLING TO BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR, AND REVIEW THE ROLES AND THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE OTHER INSTITUTIONS OF OUR NATIONAL LIFE. I'M TRULY NOT INTERESTED IN APPORTIONING BLAME, BUT I REALLY BELIEVE WE BELONG ON THE OFFENSE RATHER THAN THE DEFENSE. I THINK WE HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO GOVERNMENT ECONOMISTS WHO ARE GIVING US ADVICE ABOUT CAREER EDUCATION IN A SOCIETY WHERE THEIR POLICIES LEAVE US WITH 8% ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT AND YOUTH JOBLESSNESS FIGURES THAT MUSHROOM UP TO 40% IN THE CITIES. I THINK WE HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY TO PARENTS WHO ROUTINELY REPORT "DISCIPLINE" AS THEIR NUMBER ONE EDUCATIONAL CONCERN, WHEN THEY HAVE LOST THE APPETITE TO SAY "NO" TO THEIR OWN CHILDREN, FREQUENTLY DO NOT TAKE AN INTEREST IN THEIR SCHOOLWORK, THEY ARE TV WATCHING AT THEIR BEDTIMES. I THINK WE HAVE SOME SUGGESTIONS FOR THE HOUSING EXPERTS WHO COMPLAIN ABOUT THE PHYSICAL QUALITIES OF OUR SCHOOLS, AND FIND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVIDE STABLE, LOW - AND MODERATE - COST HOUSING FOR OUR FAMILIES.

THE LIST COULD GO ON AND ON, AND I THINK YOU SEE MY POINT. IT'S NOT AN ARGUMENT WE WANT, BUT SOME CLARITY ON THE REAL ISSUES - AND THE CONTEXT, TIME AND SUPPORT TO DO WELL THOSE THINGS WE KNOW HOW TO DO. WE ARE ALL BUSY PEOPLE. THERE ARE THREE P's WE MUST LEARN TO MANAGE: PEOPLE, PROGRAMS, AND PAPER.

DESPITE THE BARRAGE OF NEGATIVE PUBLICITY, THERE ARE SOME ENCOURAGING SIGNS. THE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS RECENTLY REPORTED ON ITS SECOND SURVEY THAT 9-YEAR OLDS ARE READING "SIGNIFICANTLY BETTER" THAN THEIR COUNTERPARTS COULD IN 1971, WITH

PARTICULARLY GOOD PROGRESS AMONG MINORITY STUDENTS. OUR JOB IS TO CONSOLIDATE, AND PROJECT AND EXTEND THAT IMPROVEMENT.

GONE FOREVER, I HOPE, ARE THE DAYS OF FINDING SOMETHING WRONG IN OUR NATION, ASKING THE SCHOOLS TO FIX IT UP AND THEN CUTTING OUR BUDGETS IN THE PROCESS. WE KNOW WE NEED EVERYONE'S HELP TO GET OUR MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, AND SHOULD FEEL NO HESITATION IN ASKING FOR IT. PARENTS AND FAMILIES CAN AND WILL HELP WHEN WE TAKE THE TIME AND TROUBLE TO SHOW THEM HOW. BUSINESS AND LABOR CAN RESPOND AS WE DOCUMENT OUR INTERDEPENDENCE. EVEN GOVERNORS AND PRESIDENTS, WHEN THEY'RE CONVINCED WE'RE GETTING DOWN TO BRASS TACKS, WILL BE MORE INCLINED TO BE RESPONSIVE.

AND OUR OWN STAFFS WILL RISE TO THE CHALLENGE. I HAVE OFTEN SAID TO OUR TEACHERS, CONCERNING MY ROLE THAT MAY BE TRUE OF YOURS: "I WAS NOT HIRED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO TELL YOU HOW TO DO YOUR JOB. RATHER I WAS ASKED TO LEAD AN EFFORT TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR YOU TO DO YOUR JOB."

RECENTLY WE CELEBRATED THE 200th BIRTHDAY OF OUR NATION AND WE THOUGHT MUCH ABOUT HEROS AND GREAT PEOPLE OF THE PAST. TOMORROW'S GREAT AMERICANS ARE WALKING IN OUR MIDST TODAY. THEY ARE IN OUR CLASSROOMS AND ON OUR PLAYGROUNDS. SOME ARE SMALL, BUT THEY WILL GROW BIG, NO MATTER WHAT WE DO. LET US HELP THEM TO BECOME GREAT, NOT JUST BIG . . . AND LET'S HELP THEM TO GROW TALL IN PRINCIPLE AS WELL AS STATUE. YEARS AGO RALPH ELLISON SAID ALL THAT I HAVE TRIED TO SAY AS HE DESCRIBED A YOUNG BOY'S PLEA.

"IF YOU CAN SHOW ME HOW TO CLING TO THAT WHICH IS REAL TO ME,
WHILE TEACHING ME A WAY INTO A LARGER SOCIETY
THEN, I WILL DROP MY DEFENSE AND HOSTILITY
I WILL SING YOUR PRAISES
AND I WILL HELP YOU MAKE THE DESERT BEAR FRUIT."

RBL/mh